

Town of Portland, Connecticut

Equal Opportunity Employer

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Testimony: Conveyance Bill

Government Administration and Elections Committee

March 19, 2010

Good afternoon, my name is Chief Robert Shea of the Portland Fire Department, along with Susan Bransfield, First Selectwoman of the Town of Portland. We are here to speak on the Conveyance Bill, specifically as it relates to our request for conveyance of State land to the Town of Portland for Fire Company #3 on Great Hill Road. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you.

The Portland Volunteer Fire Department (hereafter referred to as "the Department") was organized in 1884 and has been managed through the many requirements established by OSHA and NFPA standards relating to the deployment, command and effective operation of emergency calls within our community as well as surrounding towns.

Today the Department continues its commitment through its members in providing these services to the citizens of Portland and those who visit or merely pass through and require our assistance. Currently the Department consists of 58 active members who encompass both fire and medical personnel. These members respond from 3 locations within the town and covers over 22 square miles of community. In 2009 alone, we responded to 998 calls, and we have seen a consistent increase each year. Each firehouse houses a different variety of fire suppression and rescue apparatus.

The Department recently revised its needs assessment to reflect progress gained in the past five years and to identify current critical needs and gaps. Based on our current needs assessment performed by the Chief's office, and the town's ability to address these critical service gaps we are requesting your guidance in the acquisition of State property that currently surrounds Company #3 Fire House located at 169 Great Hill Road.

This Company is located in a remote location of our community which has seen a large increase in new sub divisions and single family housing over the past 10 years. Call volume in this area has also increased over 20% in the last 3 years. The current Firehouse was built in 1964 to house a limited amount of apparatus to protect this area. The land surrounding the Firehouse is currently owned by the state including the parking area. Currently some equipment and apparatus must be stored outside in sheds and some must be moved first to allow others to respond creating a critical delay in response.

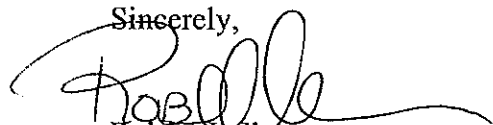
Because of this demographic change, the Department will need to make additional services available to protect this area. The additional land we are requesting from the State, which is shown on the attached site plan, is critical in allowing the department to

plan for a new Firehouse. This land will allow us to expand and provide additional room to house the required apparatus for not only today's challenges, but future challenges as well. It will also provide much needed parking for members and incorporate ADA compliant facilities to our membership that are unavailable at this time.

Hopefully, with your assistance, and the State's approval, the Department would then be prepared to submit construction plans for Town approval. Once approved, the Department will apply for grant funding under the Firefighters Station Construction Grant (SCG) to assist the town with this project. Unfortunately, without this land acquisition, the Department will be unable to meet its current needs to enhance the Company's response capabilities. The dangers of firefighting and emergency rescue are well known to all involved in the fire service. Despite the fact that the volunteer firefighters in Portland accept the inherent risks, we continue to work to minimize, and with luck, mitigate any risks we can. The proper housing and deployment of fire suppression and rescue apparatus is a key part of our commitment to the safety of our personnel and the ability to protect our citizens.

I thank you for your time and assistance in providing our members the opportunity to provide additional resources to the citizens who reside in this area of our community.

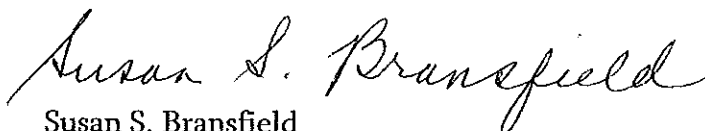
Sincerely,



Robert J. Shea

Chief

Portland Fire Department



Susan S. Bransfield

First Selectwoman

Town of Portland

Current -
Proposed -
120,000 Sq Ft

